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ABSTRACT

A novel fundraising approach for a nonprofit school for handicapped children in Hawaii includes bed racing, donation of entertainers' time for a concert, and a parade featuring children from the school. The fundraising event is also viewed as a way to fund unserved children with subtle learning problems. Suggestions are made for successful fundraising efforts (such as following up after the event to say "thank you" and listening to ideas for next year) and for child-find attempts (including using posters for advertisement and having major sponsors visit the facility to gain information about the event in which they want to participate). (CL)

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Variety School

Approaches to Public Awareness

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by

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The Council for Exceptional Convention
60th Annual International Convention
April 1982
Houston, Texas

710 Palekaua Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96816

EC150641

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CEC - CASE Paper of Presentation
in Houston, April 1982

Purpose:

Public awareness and public involvement has allowed funding of a nonprofit school to supplement existing public and private resources for handicapped children. A major portion of the funds raised for scholarships for these needy children comes from the efforts of an entertainer, Carole Kai. Her devotion to the needs of these children has existed for many years; but for the past nine years, her efforts have made a monumental difference monetarily to the continued existence of the school.

In the past two years, there has been an increased effort to use the fund raiser as a "child find" tool. In turn, "child find" has drawn significant attention to the fund raising event.

Problem:

With the economic cutbacks facing our country today, the generation of funds for "supplemental" services to more effectively meet the diagnostic and training needs of learning and developmentally disabled children is difficult to acquire. It is difficult to develop a meaningful fund raiser if the community does not see and feel the need for your services to exist. Services of a nonprofit agency which delivers care over and beyond those outlined in PL 94-142 may be considered frivolous or unnecessary in 1982 rather than essential in prevention through early identification and treatment of subtle problems--but those very problems, if unaddressed, can become the enabling criteria for eligibility "labels" as mandated by State guidelines to meet Federal Regulations of Public Law 94-142. These needs then frequently require more intense therapy for a longer period of time at the expense of the general public. The efforts of a nonprofit organization can reduce the costs to the State and more importantly help prevent some children and their families from needing intense care in the future through early diagnostics and treatment. Carole Kai has made known that the contributions to such a cause, the Variety School are cost effective and the community has responded by joining into an event that now draws a crowd of 100,000.

Method to Raise Funds

The original source of funds to the School came from soliciting big businesses to enter a Bed at $500 against other corporations. The "Beds" were to be designed on a frame that would have wheels to allow it to be the fastest vehicle as it was raced by the bed posts by 4 runners. Each bed carries a queen. The high spirited competition soon spread at a rapid pace that was strategically and carefully planned and Carole Kai personally approached the potential organizations, selling them on the advantages that were theirs if they entered the race. Company morale boomed as company picnics were developed in the park as fellow employees cheered on their runners. The free advertising that was generated as the finalists had their companies' names repeatedly announced on loud speakers as they ran off in the "heats" encouraged each advertising agent of the corporation to have "the best" runners enter the Race.

As the event grew, the Bed Race Committee saw new ways to increase the competition and present more visibility to the corporations. A fund raiser that is fun and to a corporation's advantage can be successful. A parade with decorated beds was created where each Bed was hidden under floral or clever displays. The 2-mile stretch to the Race site became a tool for free advertising of the sponsoring corporations to crowds 10 feet deep on both sides of the street, to balconies and building top parties all who were involved in the days' event. The Race Committee later expanded the Parade and Race Day activities to a 90-minute television special which allowed corporations an additional opportunity for exposure.

Then two years ago, an effort was made to expand the event to "entertainment donations." Again, Carole Kai approached the donations from their point of view, that of her friends--why would they perform for free for this cause rather than another? Visibility to crowds of people already waiting to see an entertainer just ride by in a car or appear at the Race site was the answer. In 5 weeks, Carole Kai and her volunteer committee developed a Country Time Concert to draw in a paying crowd to gather funds for her charity.

In 1981, another event had been begun, mainly to draw attention to the new Concert. A Bed was pushed by a team of 16 men completely around the island of Oahu within 24 hours, ending at the Concert itself. This year the idea grew to include 32 high schools in a team relay effort to make that same push and collect donations along the way.

So, fund raising can be fun.

Method to Find Children

Obviously the event has grown because the fund raiser is novel and fun. The final event of racing beds down the main street of a city does draw attention to the experience but not necessarily to the "cause" for all the activity--the children. In the past two years, very serious marketing considerations have been incorporated into the event to explain the reason and the need for the funds to help these students. The Director of the school and the entertainer organizing the Race recognized that among those 100,000 people watching the parade and the race, there was another 90,000 viewing television coverage who were a captive audience to "child find."

The techniques to find children early and to have parents not overlook the subtle signs were reviewed carefully. It was determined that in every Race Weekend Activity a "child find" could be incorporated into the event. The "child find" efforts were designed to identify handicapped children with subtle learning problems. Radio and television broadcasts included special interviews with the members of the Bed Race Committee, the Director of the Variety School, the parents and the children. Local visitors information advertised the weekend but NOW also talked about "child find."

The Bed Push Around the Island took on a new touch the second year with the "Mo Beddah Annual Bed Push" reaching into 32 public and private high schools. Not only were "kids helping kids" but a very new opportunity was available to talk to the future parents about learning problems. This was accomplished by assemblies, team visitation to the Variety School and Variety School staff participation with the actual Bed Push.

The Concert activities were dramatically refocused this year to again inform the public that with help, handicapped children do have a future. The parents of the children at the school utilized their own resources and talent to develop an 8-foot display with 6 large professionally done photos. They placed their display at the entrance gate, and they were available to talk to other parents and encourage them to seek help through the Department of Education - Department of Health, their family doctor, or the private settings. Parents reached parents at this booth as well as at other locations they manned to raise monies. The parents had 2 jobs - raise money and help other parents identify possible problems of their own children. They were the best speakers--because they had been there. This year's Concert Director also expanded the child find efforts by coming into the School and spending days watching the children and talking to staff to understand the message that needed to be delivered. An uncle of the students worked with the program and then--in a quiet dramatic way he turned the concert into a nighttime event of love--love for the children of the School. In a 5-minute slide show, the audience became aware of the special assistance their contributions could make in finding and treating these otherwise forgotten or overlooked children. The memory of the Concert was continued into the next day's Parade as the children rode floats. It was a time of caring--caring for the children at Variety School but also caring about the little ones that may need to be found early to help them to be saved from academic or social or emotional tragedies. As the Bed Race got underway, the announcer would restate the message to help parents watching the race to seek help early. At the concluding award program, the message was again sent out and a new understanding of the event had been born.

The efforts, however, did not end that night and a new audience was to hear the child find message one more time. Carole Kai had arranged as usual for TV coverage of the Race events. This coverage has drawn the largest audience for special event coverage in Hawaii in the past two years. The viewers included the runners, the families, and members of the competing corporations, many of whom did not attend the event. But now, five 60-minute spots reflected back to the school and the "child find" message. The staff and the parents wrote and helped develop the message which was dramatically produced to conclude the Race Weekend Events.

The event of a "Bed Race" works well for the Variety School in Hawaii to raise money and to find children who need services. But any fund raising event can

accomplish the same goal if careful analysis of your area and your event is accomplished.

FUND RAISING

1. Know who can contribute to a "major" event
2. Learn what the contributor needs in terms of exposure and advertising
3. Develop techniques that meet your contributors' basic needs
4. Follow up after the event to say thank you and listen to his ideas for next year

Child Find

1. Analyze your pre-event press coverage and include a one line message on all printed data.
2. Develop posters to be on all vehicles moving materials for your event - advertise event and a child find message.
3. Attempt to incorporate a one-minute talk about "child find" when you gather sponsors together prior to the event.
4. Fund raisers should locate a knowledgeable individual who can speak of the cause. Team work needs to be developed to "masterfully" merge both causes together at certain appointments, lunches, presales, and press coverage.
5. Have major sponsors visit your facility to gain information about the event in which they want to participate. What appear to be incidental heart-moving events can be "arranged" to allow you the opportunity to discuss your cause.
6. Look at staffing of the fund raising event. Place knowledgeable people who volunteer to assist the sponsor in key locations where they can create moments where they can talk about the cause. Example:
    - shuttle bus driver
    - individual picking up equipment and supplies
    - people selling pre-sale ticket
    - sales at event of fun items and foods
7. Analyze your (major) event to see how you can incorporate a message on your cause.
8. Attempt to have thank yous and awards in locations where your message and their pictures will remind them of your "child find" mission.

For additional information on developing a Fun Fund Raiser that also helps you Find Handicapped Children or for specific details on Bed Racing as a Fund Raiser, write to Carole Kai and Susan Baker, 710 Palekaua Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816.

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